DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 090 SP 035 453

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TITLE Preprofessional Experiences and Professional Teacher Education in France: Towards a Compatibility.
PUB DATE Apr 94
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 4-10, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Education; Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Integrated Curriculum; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Professional Education; Schools of Education; Teacher Certification; *Teacher Education Curriculum
IDENTIFIERS *France; Preservice Teachers

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relationship between preprofessional and professional training for preservice teachers in France. Preprofessionalization consists of having students at University Centers for Teacher Training include in their 3-year curriculum 10 percent vocational training, focusing on the French educational system and policies, the sociology of education, cognitive psychology, epistemology, and didactics. Professional training then takes place at one of France's 28 regional schools of education, where students emphasize academic lectures the first year (to pass a competitive exam) and field sessions the second year. The competitive exam, by which students can officially become salaried civil servants (as teachers in France are), serves as the turning point when students become trainee teachers and begin professional training. Many students view the professionalization training as a short, hectic period of time in which to become efficiently armed to start teaching the following year. Thus, future teachers go through several abrupt changes in the course of their training, as they pass from one institution to anther, study academic subjects and then cram vocational training, and change abruptly from student to trainee teacher. Efforts to integrate teacher training over the 5-year course of education are described. (Contains 24 references.) (JDD)

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ED 375 090

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PREPROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES AND PROFESSIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION IN FRANCE : TOWARDS A COMPATIBILITY

Paper presented at
AERA ANNUAL MEETING
New-Orleans - April 1994

Session : Teacher Education in France and Quebec

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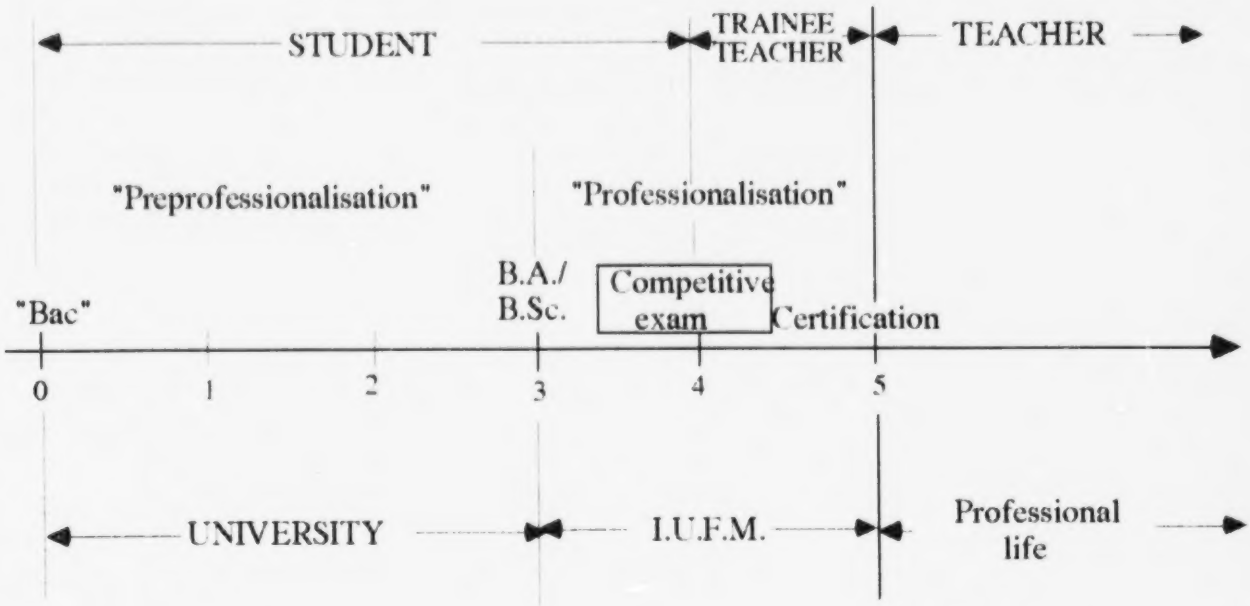
My contribution to this symposium devoted to "Teacher Education in France and Quebec" will be to examine a problem which now preoccupies French university lecturers like me, who are in charge of students who intend to become teachers, and who have to organize preprofessional courses for them.

I propose to study the relationship between these courses and the professional training given to these students later ; then I'll question the conditions of their compatibility. To do so, I shall first define the meaning of preprofessionalisation, as distinct from professionalisation, in preservice teacher training in the French context which is somewhat different from the North American one.

Preprofessionalisation and professionalisation as two stages of teacher training in France

This distinction can only be understood if related to the present situation of teacher training in France ("present" meaning since 1989, the date of the latest major reform in this field), which can be represented by the following diagramm.



So I'll give five main points of information about this context and refer to the diagramm :

1.First for an American audience, one thing must be remembered about the French system: a teacher is a **civil servant**, which means that he is paid by the State (by Central Government) and that he is not chosen by a school, but appointed to a job by the Ministry of Education. Before being appointed, he/she must pass a competitive exam.

2.The second point is that, since the 1989 Education Act, **all teachers** - primary or secondary teachers - must take a degree at the University after a three-year course, but this degree is not specialized in Education. It concentrates on one given subject, such as French language and literature or Maths or English, etc.

3.The third point is that **before 1989**, there were **two distinct paths** if you wanted to become a teacher :

- for primary school preservice teachers, a very strong professional training had always been needed : it took place till 1989 in Training Colleges during 2 years at least after the competitive exam ;
- for secondary school teachers, academic studies were always considered as sufficient to become a teacher. Students read for the competitive exam at the University one year after their B.A. or B.Sc. Then the only one year of so called "professional training" was based mainly on fieldwork experience.

Now, since the 1989 Education Act, after their three-year course at University, **all** future primary and secondary school teachers have to register at a **IUFM**, which is a University School of Education, a new type of institution, created by the 1989 Education Act and replacing all the existing ones, in particular the Training Colleges. This type of institution is half-way between a University and a School of Education and it is under control of the Ministry of Education, much more so than Universities.

The IUFMs (they are 28 in France, one by region) were created in 1989 to be officially in charge of teacher professional training. This seemed to establish a clear-cut division between academic curriculum first at the University, then professional training (**what I call "professionalisation"**) at the IUFM.

4.The fourth point : the "preprofessionalisation"

However in 1984 - which means long before the creation of the IUFMs - the Ministry of Education encouraged universities to include 10% vocational training in the curriculum of all undergraduates. In many universities, "vocational training", at that stage, was largely limited to preprofessional training for students who intended to become teachers.

The task of developing and coordinating this training was generally devoted to centers specifically created within universities : University Centers for Teacher Training (French initials CUFEF). They are not departments or faculties ; they are organized on a cross-departmental basis; they also try to develop research groups in education or didactics and are partners in the continuing vocational training of in-service teachers.

Curriculum and teaching in these centers may differ from one university to the other, since they owe their existence to the dedication and initiative of a few individuals, who did not often belong to Education Departments, but had a combined interest in vocational training and didactics. In spite of local differences, the heads of these centers

have formed a nation-wide network (called ARCUFEF) to discuss their problems and experiences, and also to obtain specific financing from the Ministry.

So most students who intend to become teachers may now include in their degree curriculum at University a few lectures and field sessions (about 100 hours). **That's what we call "preprofessionalisation"**. The idea is that it will be enable them to draw greater benefit from the professional course they will have later at the IUFM. The other point is that they can also begin to acquire some of the abilities required for a teacher.

5. The fifth point : objectives and content of the two stages

- Preprofessionalisation

On this diagram, you can see the main objectives, methods and content of the preprofessional courses. In the third column ("CONTENTS"), we often say "rudiments of..." because one must not forget that students, during the three-year degree course, spend 90% of their time studying their subject, so that preprofessionalisation cannot be real teacher training yet.

OBJECTIVES	METHODS	CONTENT
- to make a vocational choice - to confront one's own mental image of the teaching profession to its social image - to discover the professional surroundings of a teacher - to identify the skills required to be a practitioner - to assess one's own training needs	*During short field sessions* : - fieldwork survey of educational practices - observation/analysis of different teaching/learning situations *During university courses* : - systematic exploring of mental images - experience of team-work (especially for collecting information) and micro-teaching - comparative study of texts related to education - training in written and oral communication techniques and tools	- French educational system, history of education, education policies - Rudiments in sociology of education, cognitive psychology - Rudiments of epistemology and didactics (how to teach maths, French language and literature, etc.) *NB : these contents are not formal lectures, but information given "à-la-carte" according to students' needs as they appear in relation with their fieldwork observations*

- Professionalisation

At the IUFM, as we have already seen, the aim is to make the students able to teach at the end of the two years. Because of the competitive exam, their curriculum is organized differently during the first and the second year : less field sessions and more academic lectures (which is the kind ot teaching they need to pass the competitive exam) during the first year, and the other way round the second year. We could say that their "pedagogical" training takes place mainly during the second year and mainly through field work.

What is remarkable is that in France, most IUFM trainers and many students find it difficult to admit the formative value of education science teaching. In their mind, academic studies provide the basis of the teacher's competence, especially for secondary-school teachers.

Two points to be clarified, so as to understand the problem of compatibility

So two separate institutions - University and IUFM - are supposed to be in charge of two separate phases of teacher training. I will try to examine first the problem of their relationship, which will lead me to another question : when does professionalisation really begin from the student's point of view ?

1. Relationship between Universities and IUFMs

The name itself of IUFM is misleading : these institutions are neither universities, nor faculties, nor University departments. Their heads are appointed by the Ministry of Education, whereas university deans or vice chancellors are elected by their colleagues.

In other words, by the 1989 Education Act, the Government clearly showed that it did not want to integrate teacher training within universities, so as to keep a national control over it ; it would not have been possible if this training had been passed on to universities which are largely free to determine their own curriculum.

This ambiguous status was the outcome of a long argument. The result is that universities find it difficult to establish a clear relationship with the IUFMs. In fact we can see now, 4 years later, that the Government could not really make up its mind between two attitudes : either granting autonomy and real university status to these regional institutions - for instance by allowing each of them to define its own curriculum - or maintaining its central control over them.

However the IUFM is officially linked with the universities located within the same region, which are invited to cooperate with it. It is not very easy to do so when two institutions refer to such different conceptions.

2.Students' attitudes toward the two phases of teacher training

Perhaps the dividing line between the two phases should not in fact be placed at the entrance in the IUFM. Students spend two years at the IUFM, but the **competitive exam**, by which they officially become salaried civil servants, is the real turning point. So during the first three years at University + the first year at the IUFM, they can still be considered as **students** ; after which, during the second year at the IUFM, they become **trainee teachers** and certification comes only at the end of the second year at the IUFM. After this certification, they really become **teachers** and enter **professional life**.

As you can see, the first year at the IUFM has an ambiguous status, especially for secondary preservice teachers : they are preparing for the competitive exam and most of their lectures still take place at the University, because most of the papers they have to write for the exam concern the subject of their degree. This is not the case for future primary-school teachers who prepare for the competitive exam only at the IUFM.

Nevertheless, in the mind of <u>all</u> students, things change in practice only after they have succeeded in the competitive exam. Then, and only then, their social status changes, they become trainee teachers, and professional training can really begin.

My experience leads me to think that what is interesting to explore is precisely this passage, the moment when commitment to a vocational choice considerably modifies students' reception of teaching.

- **At preprofessional stage**, the way students react to the various forms of teaching (lectures, methodological training, field sessions) is significantly different from the way

they react in a IUFM. They consider themselves only as students and do not feel that their future is already determined. However they find two types of interest in these courses :

-During field sessions, they develop what Perrenoud calls an inquisitive type of approach to practitioners. They accept to take the observer's position even if they sometimes feel frustrated not to play an active part.

-During university courses, they often discover a type of teaching which is different from their usual experience of university lectures.

In fact, these courses are meant to be "appetizers", as Perrenoud nicely says. But even if students finally decide not to become teachers, they will draw intellectual benefit from what they have learnt in these preprofessional sessions. In particular they will gain an epistemological or critical approach to the subject of their degree course. For all these reasons, one may consider that it is legitimate and fruitful to include this teaching as part of a university curriculum, even if it has no vocational effect.

-**During professionalisation** : it is tempting to build up the negative counterpart of this somewhat idealized portrait, when speaking of students who have registered at the IUFM. Indeed several points tend to justify this analysis :

-These students are reluctant to spend much time exploring their own mental image of the teaching profession. They have already made their vocational choice ; they are not prepared to venture along a path which would lead them to question their decision.

-They prefer to be offered a ready-made curriculum based on what their trainers consider as necessary to become teachers, rather than try to analyze their own assets and shortcomings so as to build up an individualised training syllabus.

-They are often moved by a feeling of urgency : they apply all their energies, during the first year, to studying for the competitive exam, and during the second year, to coping with field-work. The consequence is that they pick up only what is related to these two objectives in the training they receive. They are expecting immediate results rather than long-term effects.

-During field sessions, they are inclined to look for recipes, ready-made formulas, models (they expect mentor teachers to tell them how they would solve a particular problem). What they want is a survival kit to relieve their stress. They are reluctant to learn from observation; they want to act.

-As regards didactics, they are primarily interested in planning. If one refers to the three poles of the didactic triangle model (teacher/content/student) we might say that they are rather obsessed by the teacher pole instead of trying to put the three together.

I am fully aware that the preceding analysis tends to oversimplify the situation; however, it stresses the important point that many IUFM students perceive this professionalisation training as a short, hectic period of time during which they expect to be efficiently armed to start teaching the following year. Some preservice secondary school teachers even develop a curious attitude : they prefer to concentrate exclusively on preparing lesson plans for the five or six weekly classes they have to take and resent being compelled by the IUFM to attend training courses which seem to them not directly related to lesson planning.

How can we formulate the probleme of compatibility ?

So we can see that future teachers go through several **abrupt changes** in the course of their training :

- they pass from one institution to another ;
- they are first supposed to study academic subjects often without any vocational preoccupation; then to cram vocational training in a short period of time ;
- their status changes abruptly from student to trainee teacher.

We saw that such abrupt changes have a major impact on the way students react to training. Now, to avoid this, preprofessionalisation has been conceived so as to allow a **progressive** integrated initiation of students to professional life and, as such, is totally opposed to the concept of abrupt change. The people in charge of preprofessionalisation try to show the benefit students can draw from a continuous progressive training, mixing up academic and vocational elements in various proportions over the five years.

They justify this position by the fact that teaching has become a more difficult job in modern society, which means that teacher training takes up more energy and time.This is also demonstrated by recent research-work in the French speaking world dealing with teacher professionalism (Demailly, Bancel, Perrenoud, Carbonneau).

1. Recent attempts to define teacher professionalism

Research conducted in France in the early 80s, but also the findings of the expert commission appointed by the former Ministry of Education (called Bancel Commission), as well as the papers published by the ARCUFEF, lead to the similar conclusion that it is necessary to go beyond the idea of curriculum content and to define a certain number of professional skills which must be acquired by preservice teachers.

First we notice an evolution from the notion of "qualification", which refers to the academic degree needed for being appointed as a teacher, to the notion of "competence", which refers both to knowledge and skills required in practice by professional situations (Demailly, 1987).

In the Report produced by Bancel Commission (1989), the definition of professionalism is based on :

- three poles of knowledge :
  1.knowledge related to subject,
  2.knowledge related to learning process,
  3.knowledge related to educational system
- and seven professional skills :
  1.curriculum planning
  2.planned management of classroom
  3.monitoring and assessment of teaching/learning situations
  4.regulating relation in classroom
  5.offering pupils methodological guidance in their schoolwork
  6.helping pupils conceive realistic vocational plans
  7.working in partnership with others.

So, a general agreement seems to exist about this inventory of professional skills, and it extends beyond France, since recent research by Michel Carbonneau based on the North American educational background comes to a similar conclusion. However, as said the Bancel Report in 1989, the content of this list needed to be translated into curriculum

planning for teacher training, covering several stages with "harmonious and continuous interaction between all types of teaching, vocational or academic".

This so called "harmonious and continuous interaction" has not really been achieved over the last five years. The question is : why ?

2. **Obstacles to a progressive, integrated five-year training**

To reach the objectives contained in such a definition of professionalism, you need time :

-first because students must be helped in the slow building up of their professional identity, starting from mental images which are generally far removed from the present realities of the teaching profession.

-secondly , because some of the skills they need can only be acquired through a long and arduous process.

It so happens that these views are not yet commonly accepted:

-a certain proportion of those who are responsible for teacher training , academic or vocational, are reluctant to adhere to the findings of the Bancel commission, which was composed of specialists in educational research. This is particularly true of some academics who are still persuaded that knowing a subject is enough to enable you to teach it at primary or secondary school level. This means that, even within universities, there is a gap between the lecturers who are in charge of preprofessionalisation and their colleagues who teach academic subjects in various departments.

-This opinion is largely shared by present political leaders who seem to have a rather outdated view of the teaching profession.

-As to the general public, and that includes students, they are certainly aware that the working conditions of teachers have become harder, but they are still convinced that the only possible form of preparation is on-the-job training.

These are human obstacles , but there are also **structural ones** : even if one is convinced that the training of preservice teachers should meet the objectives defined in the Bancel report , it is not easy to define the contents and training methods which would make it possible to reach these objectives. This is the kind of task which requires teamwork and can only be achieved through the combined efforts of all those who want to turn teachers into real professionals. But the environment is not, at present, favourable to this type of initiative :

-it is not favourable in universities where energies are concentrated on teaching a rapidly increasing number of students with a stagnating number of lecturers ; this situation prevents the development of innovative preproprefessionalisation courses which have sometimes been going on for 10 years and attract large groups of students ;

-it is not favourable either within the IUFMs where organisational problems have taken precedence over qualitative preoccupations.

The result of these combined obstacles is that, today, the evolution is towards a strengthening of the discontinuity existing between a long phase of academic training and a short, limited phase of professional training, which is the opposite of a harmonious integration.

Conclusion : pessimism or qualified optimism ?

Should we, then, take a pessimistic view of the cohabitation between these two phases of training for preservice teachers as they appear to-day ?

I don't think so, because, even if the training given by the IUFMs at present does not come up to the expectations they had raised when they were created, among all those who saw them as an opportunity to really improve teacher training, it is undoubtable that, sooner or later, they will have to meet the real **demand** for training which develops more and more distinctly among students who are growing aware of the present difficulties of the teaching profession.

So, there will be no choice :

- **Those in charge of this training** will have to admit that having a stage of purely academic training, followed by a stage of purely professional training, is an outdated **principle**. The two must be integrated into a continuum, from registration at University to the moment when they take up their first job as qualified teachers, the proportion being obviously different over the five-year period.
- **The students** will have to admit that, over the whole period of preservice training, theoretical and practical training must interact, that there should not be a time for acedemic teaching at university, followed by a time for professional training at the IUFM. Present-day pupils create such complex classroom situations that, from the first moment students are confronted to field-work, they must use theory as a grid of interpretation for what they experience.

One can even say that it is only if they have made a habit of doing this during preservice training that they will have the analytical tools that will help them solve problems throughout their career.

- **The trainers** will have to admit that future teachers are adults, that their mental images and previous attainments must be taken into account; these trainers should be aware that the part they must play is not to train students but to help them train themselves.

If these principles are really accepted by all these participants in the training process, they will find it easier to work together so as to build training schedules which will be harmoniously arranged over the five post-college years.

In fact the question of compatibility between preprofessionalisation and professionalisation hides a more revealing one about diverging conceptions of what professionalism really means for a teacher. These diverging conceptions may well outlive superficial agreement on reforms and delay their implementation.

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